

BOOKS & THE ARTS

Will Any Socialist Revolution Be Let Alone?

THE UNITED STATES AND CHILE: Imperialism and the Overthrow of the Allende Government. By James Petras and Morris Morley. Monthly Review Press. 217 pp. \$10.95.

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When Salvador Allende assumed the Chilean Presidency in November of 1970, his Popular Unity government defined as its aim the replacement of "the present economic structure, putting an end to monopolistic capital, both Chilean and foreign," as well as to big landed estates, "so as to begin the construction of socialism."

That was the platform on which the Allende coalition had campaigned and for which a plurality of the Chilean electorate—albeit a slender one—had voted. Though politicians and parties are not especially noted for honoring electoral promises and inaugural pledges, no one doubted that Allende and the parties making up his coalition meant precisely what they said, and they quickly demonstrated it in practice. The Chilean regime of 1970 thus stands out as the first popularly elected government in a country with a democratic tradition to undertake independently to transform its society from capitalist to socialist within a relatively brief time span.

The process, obviously, required elimination of the powerful U.S. corporations which dominated the nation's economy. Since the U.S. Government is dedicated to the proposition that one of its primary functions is the preservation of the freedom of American business to expand its operations with minimal hindrance everywhere, it perceived the Allende government as a menace to be removed.

The facts concerning the CIA's role in Allende's removal have received wide public airing in the various official investigations and journalistic exposés. We know that its extensive efforts to prevent Allende's election and then to sub-

vert his regime—that is, to have him overthrown by military force and violence—were undertaken with express White House authorization. We know these efforts involved bribing Chilean Congressmen, plots to assassinate Army Chief of Staff René Schneider so as to provoke a military coup, penetration of Chilean political parties, subsidizing the anti-Allende media, "destabilizing" the economy by financing anti-government strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, etc. After studying the testimony, however, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities headed by Sen. Frank Church concluded that the CIA was not directly involved in the military coup that destroyed the Allende government. The Committee's conclusion has been widely interpreted to mean that the U.S. Government had no direct—or major—role in the counterrevolution. That, for example, was the editorial position taken by *The New York Times*.

In their meticulously documented study, James Petras and Morris Morley demonstrate, however, that the CIA operation was only one item—and by no means the most important one—in an overall program orchestrated from Washington for the elimination of the democratically elected Chilean Government. They observe that while the extent of CIA involvement is not yet known, the agency's activities clearly complemented the larger economic processes generated by the secret 40 Committee of the National Security Council.

Before describing these processes as Petras and Morley document them, I would offer this caveat. The Allende coalition's ascension to executive power by way of democratic elections, its efforts to introduce measures leading to socialism constitutionally and its subsequent fate are plainly matters of enormous historic significance for an appreciation of the problems of revolutionary social change in a parliamentary democracy. Hence they demand the closest study. The destruction of the regime was the result, obviously, of the interaction of external (U.S.) and internal forces. Both played a role and both require analysis. Petras and Morley demonstrate the absurdity of dismissing, or assigning a minor part, to U.S. intervention on the grounds that the CIA, apparently, was not directly involved in the final military coup. Since their con-

cern is primarily with Washington's role, a full examination of the forces operating within Chile would appear to be beyond the scope of their work. But there is an implication that U.S. intervention is virtually the entire story and that the outcome in such cases is inevitable—unless a nation renders itself impenetrable through the methods used by Castro. Yet the effectiveness of the measures taken by Washington was also determined by the means employed to counter them in Chile. This, too, needs examination for what it can tell us about the dynamics of socialist transformation. To overlook the internal dimension of the Chilean struggle, to perceive the socialist coalition's defeat solely in terms of U.S. intervention, leaves no room for examining possible shortcomings of the Allende government and the problems raised by this profoundly important experience. But more on this later.

As Petras and Morley describe it, the National Security Council—not the CIA—was made responsible for the Nixon-Kissinger policy to block or destroy an Allende regime. Various government agencies were involved, notably the Treasury Department and others concerned with international economic relations, as well as the Defense Department. The CIA's role was one facet of a policy embracing several interrelated processes, including: diplomatic and political pressures to isolate Chile internationally; economic squeeze to provoke dislocations and social conflict; intensification of the bond between the U.S. and Chilean military, including increases in military aid and training of Chilean officers; maintenance of political and diplomatic relations, including the pretense of negotiation of differences, in order to collect information, test reactions and keep up ties with Allende's opposition; provision of resources, material and organizational, to various elements of that opposition.

Both government officials and field operatives of the International Telephone and Telegraph Company (ITT), a major multinational corporation working closely with the administration, laid out the basic tactics in separate memoranda. U.S. Ambassador Nathaniel Davis sent a memorandum to the State Department in 1971 that a military coup could occur only when public

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